

MONTAGUE PUBLIC LIBRARIES TRUSTEES MEETING AGENDA

Monday, April 24th, 2023 at 6:30PM

By Zoom

Zoom:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85171646120?pwd=Y2hrSjhtNGFwQmVmbINmK3J0VisyUT09>

Meeting ID: 851 7164 6120

Passcode: Montague

1. Call to order
2. Public Comment Period: Please limit comments to two minutes

REGULAR BUSINESS *(Please read all handouts prior to meeting. Meeting time will be for edits and questions only.)*

3. Approval of minutes from 3/20/23
4. Director's update—See attached report
5. Children's Department update: See programming report, at bottom of director's report
6. Update from: Special Services
7. Update from: Building Committee
8. Update from: Personnel Committee
9. Corresponding Secretary's report
10. Update from: Friends of the Library

DISCUSSION TOPICS

11. Review and vote on MPL's Letter of Intent for the Massachusetts Public Library Construction Grant Program
12. Discuss use of state aid funds for professional development. For consideration: what kind of opportunities will qualify for reimbursement? How much ought to be allocated each year? Review Angela's requests for this year.
13. Items not anticipated within 48 hours of meeting. Votes may be taken
14. Next meeting date, agenda suggestions
15. Adjourn

Friends Report

April, 2023

1. The tree in front of the Carnegie Library will not be cut down, but will have its largest limb removed in the coming weeks. I haven't been informed of an exact date, but I'm hopeful that the work will be completed before we are slated to put our tent up for summer programming.
2. At their 4/10 meeting, the Selectboard approved my request to allocate \$2,740.00 for the cost of leasing an outdoor tent for the Carnegie Library lawn between 5/22 and 9/25. The tent will be used for storytimes and children's activities led by Angela and Makayla, will be bookable by outside groups looking for outdoor meeting space, and will be a school meal distribution location Monday thru Friday for the month of July.
3. Panic buttons for all three library locations are scheduled to be installed on Tuesday, 4/25.
4. I've worked with Suzor IT to develop a 3-4 year plan for replacing the libraries' computers. Four all-in-one desktops were purchased using state aid funds and will replace one of the Carnegie's public computers, Makayla's computer, and the staff machines at both Millers Falls and Montague Center. Brandon, from Suzor, set the computers up half-way, but has been diverted to other departments for the last two weeks. With luck, he will finish working on them on Tuesday, 4/25. Both my computer and Kathleen's have been malfunctioning, so I'm hoping to replace those two machines as well as one Carnegie staff computer and the battery back-up supply at the start of FY24 using state aid funds as well. Starting in FY25 computer replacement will be incorporated into the library budget.
5. With the help of the Personnel Committee, I created a new self-assessment to use as the basis for upcoming staff evaluations. Staff have until 4/21 to fill out their assessments, then I'll schedule reviews in the next 4-6 weeks.
6. At town meeting on May 6, the libraries hope to pass our new budget, which includes additional hours at the Carnegie, as well as a small capital project to replace the back windows and back door of the Millers Falls Branch. Should the budget pass, then we will hire a new staff member for 13 hours per week at the Carnegie Library and Makayla, our children's library assistant, will also have her hours increased.
7. Montague Center has a new copier and Millers Falls switched from hosting a monthly hot chocolate social to a monthly lemonade social starting this month.

March programming stats are on the following two pages

Dates	Program Title	Program Location	Number of Participants	Intended Audience
WEEK 1				
1-Mar	Story-Time	Live In-Person On-Site (MC)	9	ages 0-5
1-Mar	Crossroads: Food for Thought	Live In-Person On-Site (MC)	35	Adult
2-Mar	Playgroup	Live In-Person On-Site (MC)	2	ages 0-5
2-Mar	Outreach - Sheffield Elementary Literacy Night (grades 2-5)	Live In-Person Offsite (TF)	15	ages 6-11
3-Mar	Outreach - Hillcrest Elementary Literacy Night (grades Pre-K-1)		25	ages 4-6
4-Mar	Book Sale	Live In-Person On-Site (TF)	Cancelled/weather	General Audience
4-Mar	Crossroads: Native Memories: Recovering Pocumtuck Histories in Franklin County	Live In-Person (Shea Theater)	325	Adults
WEEK 2				
8-Mar	Story Time	Live In-Person On-Site (MC)	8	ages 0-5
9-Mar	Playgroup	Live In-Person On-Site (MC)	8	ages 0-5
9-Mar	Hot Chocolate Social	Live In-Person On-Site (MF)		General Audience
10-Mar	Crossroads: Rural Landscapes: Painting Workshop	Live In-Person On-Site (MC)	14	Adult
WEEK 3				
11-Mar	Crossroads: Deepening the Power of Place	Live In-Person (Shea Theater)	175	Adult
13-Mar	Teen/Adult Take & Make	Live In-Person (All 3)	80	General Audience
13-Mar	Friends Meeting	Live In-Person On-Site (TF)	7	Adult
15-Mar	Story Time	Live In-Person On-Site (MC)	Cancelled/weather	ages 0-5
15-Mar	MC Author, Caroline Wampole	Live In-Person On-Site (MC)	36	Adult
16-Mar	Playgroup	Live In-Person On-Site (MC)	8	ages 0-5
18-Mar	Life-Size Candyland	Live In-Person On-Site (MC)	43	General Audience
WEEK 4				
22-Mar	Story Time	Live In-Person On-Site (MC)	10	ages 0-5
23-Mar	Playgroup	Live In-Person On-Site (MC)	2	ages 0-5

24-Mar	Youth Advisory Committee	Live In-Person On-Site (TF)	3	YA
All Month	Grab & Go Craft	Live In-Person (All 3)	75	ages 6-11
All Month	Grab & Go Science	Live In-Person (All 3)	68	ages 6-11
30-Mar	MC Book Group	Live In-Person On-Site (MC)	7	Adult
WEEK 5				
29-Mar	Story Time	Live In-Person On-Site (MC)	7	ages 0-5
30-Mar	Playgroup	Live In-Person On-Site (MC)	12	ages 0-5
30-Mar	Outreach - Brick House	Live In-Person On-Site (TF)	7	YA
		TOTAL:	981	

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Preliminary Statement of Need (in 600 words or less, describe the service and facility needs that will be addressed in the project. Do not include needs based on deferred maintenance of the existing building) *

The Trustees of the Montague Public Libraries and the Libraries' Director intend to apply for the Massachusetts Public Library Construction Grant Program in the hopes of expanding the Carnegie Library or constructing a new main library. Completed in 1904, the Carnegie Library in downtown Turners Falls boasts lovely architectural features. Unfortunately, the curving staircase and large entryway take up much of the library's interior footprint, making what looks like a large building from the outside quite small in reality. Realizing that the building lacked adequate space, the library's Trustees first sought an addition in 1915, which did not materialize.

In the 108 years since then, two additional expansion efforts have failed. The town's population has increased by 2,000 and the number and variety of materials needed to serve the community have expanded, but the main library remains unchanged. Patrons and staff have made do as well as they can, but the building's inadequacies were the main complaint made by patrons surveyed for the Montague Public Libraries' 2022 strategic plan. Respondents called out the building's inaccessibility, lack of parking, lack of reading space, and lack of space for young adult materials. One survey respondent did not mince words, commenting, "the physical layout is atrocious."

The building is technically accessible, thanks to a wheelchair ramp added in 1997, but those using a chair are limited to browsing in the children's area and the new books section. The adult fiction, non-fiction, and media collections are inaccessible, as are the restroom, the local history collection, and the program space on the second floor of the building.

Though Turners Falls is a community of voracious readers, our cramped shelf space dictates that for every book added to the collection, one must be removed. The popular local history room has been occupied for several years by two full-time staff members, due to the unsuitability of the basement for office use. While the basement will soon be renovated, this means that the Children's Librarian, Library Director, and Tech Services/Local History Librarian will be utterly removed from the comings and goings of local patrons. This disconnection from the main patron space disallows the kind of patron engagement that staff wish to have. The local history room will again be available for public use, but is too small to house even half of the local history collection.

Though the second floor provides program space for up to 100 participants, it can only be reached by a 23-stair staircase, which proves difficult for those with bad knees or small children, and impossible for those who use a wheelchair. Though some programs are still held in the space, library staff frequently hold programs at accessible off-site locations or outdoors in an effort to be equitable to patrons of all abilities.

By pursuing funding through the MPLCP, the Libraries' Trustees and Director will be able to explore the space needs and interests of the community. From previous feedback, we know that our patrons want accessible and comfortable spaces to work, study, and meet. They want space for children's programs and a separate teen area. All of these things would be feasible in a new or improved building. After a century of limping along in a beautiful but limited facility, we look forward to the prospect of providing the community with a building that fosters connection between neighbors, intellectual curiosity, learning, play, and respite.



Office of the Selectboard

Town of Montague

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2023-04-25 Appendix III: Town letter of support for building grant application

Andrea Bono-Bunker
Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners
90 Canal St. Suite 500
Boston, MA 02114

Dear Ms. Bono-Bunker,

Montague's historic Carnegie Library, located in downtown Turners Falls, has long been a beloved institution. Despite its diminutive size, generations of Montague residents grew up attending storytimes on its second floor, perusing the stacks for their next read, or using a public computer to sign up for their first email address. These activities and more continue in the present.

As beloved as this historic building may be, it has required that library staff provide services in very limited and sometimes inaccessible program spaces. While its programs are popular and, in most regards, successful, the constraints of the building nonetheless limit their scale and reach. After decades of consideration, the Selectboard believes it is time to explore expanding our Main Branch library to better meet the 21st century needs of the Montague community.

Though there is not yet consensus among those in town over whether to expand the Carnegie Library or to construct a new building, there is drive within the community to embark upon a library project. Results from the town's recent Comprehensive Plan survey showed that when asked "What municipal improvements or municipal priorities would you like Montague officials to focus on over the next 15 years?" the top response was "libraries."

As such, we support the Trustees of the Montague Public Libraries and the Library Director's intention to submit an application to the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program and to start the process of determining the library needs and interests of those who live in Montague for a library building program.

Sincerely,

Richard Kuklewicz
Selectboard

Christopher Boutwell
Vice Chair

Matthew Lord
Clerk